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Craven's Soft Hackle Emerger



Fly Patterns brought to you by Charlie's FlyBox

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Charlie Craven and Charlie's FlyBox, Inc.

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step: 1

Pattern Description

The Soft Hackle Emerger is an old pattern for me that I originally came up with back in my guiding days. I developed this pattern as an alternative to the ubiquitous RS-II. I have since discovered why this pattern has produced so well for me. It seems that Baetis do not fall onto the water in the spinner stage as many other mayflies do. Instead, Baetis crawl down sticks and rocks into the water to lay their eggs. After depositing the eggs, the spinners die and drift off with the current. I believe that this pattern effectively imitates these drowned spinners. When I first spotted the naturals crawling down the legs of my clients' waders (only green waders for some reason), I noticed their wings were held together and upright along their backs, and that they were rather rigid. The profile of the Soft Hackle Emerger matches that of the natural exactly. While I originally developed this pattern as an emerger imitation, I now believe that it is most often taken as a drowned spinner. Either way, the fish eat it and I'm not going to argue with that! I generally fish this pattern as a nymph with lead or a heavier fly on the leader for weight, but have also had great success by greasing it up and fishing it as a cripple in the

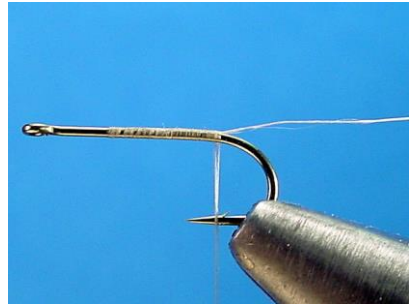
Materials Needed:

Hook: TMC 101 #16-22 Thread: 10/0 Gudebrod, Gray Tails: Med Dun Betts Tailing Fibers, split Abdomen: Gray Beaver or Muskrat Dubbing Wing: White Umpqua Flouro-Fiber Hackle: Med Dun Hen Neck Hackle, soft Thorax: Gray Beaver or Muskrat Dubbing

surface film. You can also fish it like a traditional wet-fly with a down and across swing and experience some jolting strikes. The cool thing about this pattern is that you can hardly fish it wrong; on the bottom, on the swing, in the surface film, drag free or sliding cross current, it has the profile to pull fish in.

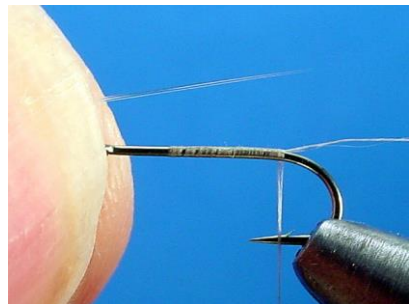
step: 2

Attach the thread at the seventy percent point on the hook, leaving a long tag end. Wrap back over the tag end of the thread, being sure to keep it squarely on top of the hook shank, back to the bend of the hook.



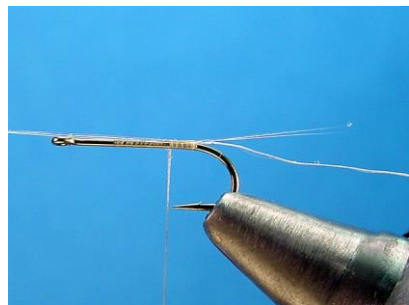
step: 3

Even the tips of two tailing fibers and measure them against the shank so they are one shank length long.



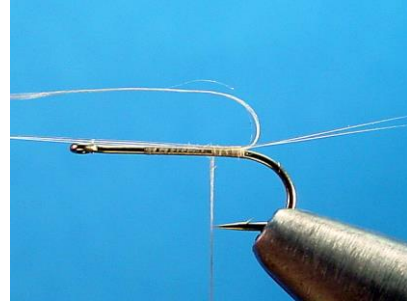
step: 4

Tie the tailing fibers in at the bend of the hook with the tips extending back one shank length beyond the bend. Make certain the tailing fibers are attached to the top of the hook shank and not off to one side.



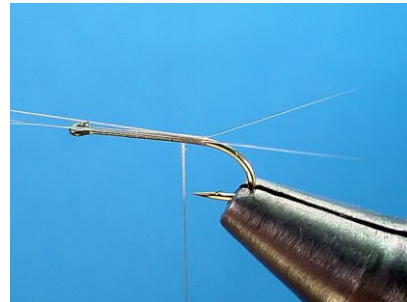
step: 5

Pull the tag end of the thread that was hanging from the bend up between the two tailing fibers.



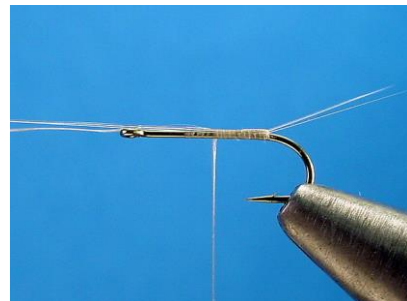
step: 6

Draw the tag end of the thread tight to separate the tailing fibers. Pulling harder will force the tails further apart, while relaxing the thread tension will allow them to come back together a bit. You can adjust the angle of each tail by pulling the tag end of the thread slightly to one side or the other.



step: 7

Once the tails are properly positioned, bind down the tag end of the thread with the working thread. Wrap forward over the tag end of the thread to at least the fifty-percent point on the shank.



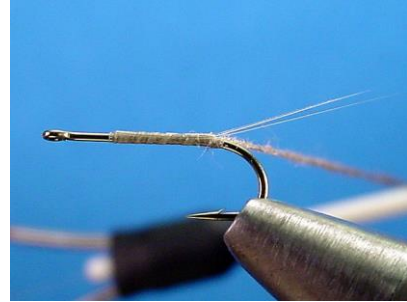
step: 8

Clip the butt ends of the tailing fibers as well as the remaining tag end of the thread from the hook. Apply a thin layer of dubbing to the tying thread and work the bare thread back toward the bend of the hook.



step: 9

Make the first turn of dubbed thread under the tails to help elevate them.



step: 10

Continue wrapping the dubbed thread forward from immediately in front of the tails to the seventy-percent point on the shank. Make a single, thin layer of dubbing to start with.



step: 11

Double back with the dubbing to fatten up and taper the front of the abdomen. Finish with bare thread hanging at the front edge of the abdomen.



step: 12

Wrap a thread base from the front of the abdomen to about a half an eye length back from the hook eye and back to the front of the abdomen for the wing that is to follow.



step: 13

Cut about a dozen strands of Flouro-Fiber from the hank and tie them in so there is about an inch of material sticking out over the hook eye with the remaining length extending toward the tails. Make several tight turns of thread to anchor the wing material.



step: 14

Pull the Flouro-Fiber that is sticking out over the hook eye back on top of the rearward pointing fibers and bind them in place as one unit. Attaching the wing in this manner makes for a much more durable tie in as the fibers are now looped around the thread. Wrap over all the Flouro-Fiber strands back to the front edge of the abdomen.



step: 15

Leave the Flouro-Fiber wing long for the time being.



step: 16

Select and size (one and a half hook gaps widths) a blue dun hen neck feather. Prepare the base of the feather by stripping the fluff, exposing the quill for a length of about 5 millimeters.



step: 17

Tie the hen feather in at the front edge of the Flouro-Fiber wing with the inside (concave) of the feather toward the hook shank. Be sure to tightly secure the hackle feather to the hook with several tight turns of thread.



step: 18

Wrap the hen feather forward with two or three turns, no more than three, and tie the feather off with the thread. Clip the remaining feather tip off flush against the shank.



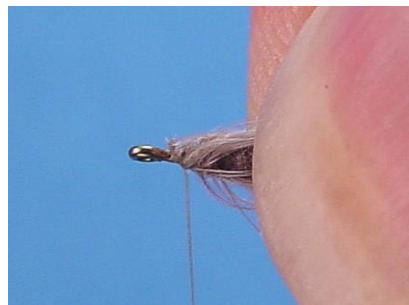
step: 19

Pinch the hackle fibers back with your thread hand, being sure to keep them spread the complete 360 degrees around the shank. Hold the fibers back until you go to the next step.



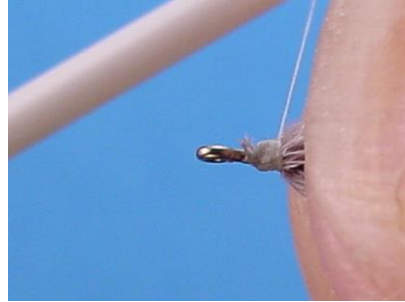
step: 20

Grasp the tips of the hackle fibers in your material hand now and hold them back along the body while you...



step: 21

...make a few turns of thread over their bases to hold them in place. These turns of thread will help hold the hackle in its' swept back position.



step: 22

The resulting hackle collar should look something like this.



step: 23

Apply another thin layer of dubbing to the thread and begin wrapping it right behind the hook eye.



step: 24

Wrap the dubbing back toward the hackle forming the conically shaped head/thorax. You may even overlap the dubbing onto the hackle slightly. Wrap over the top of the first layer of dubbing to the rear of hook eye to finish off the head.



step: 25

Once at the rear of the hook eye, remove any excess dubbing from the thread and whip finish.



step: 26

Trim the wing to length. I shoot for even with the end of the dubbed body/base of the tail.



step: 27

Like this.



step: 28

Or this.



step: 29

Brush the dubbing out with a TMC Dubbing brush to soften up the body and head shape a bit. You can skip this step if you like, but I have come to prefer the soft, flowing look achieved by brushing the dubbing out so it blends into the hackle fibers slightly.



step: 30

You bug oughtta look something like this about now. If it does, great, if not, fish it anyway, fish only have pea-sized brains, remember?

